

representation of a man hanging on the gallows. Many people overlook so much of the crucifix and add so much in imagination that they get great edification from it. The language used in the communion about eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ refers to nothing in our mores, and appeals to nothing in our experience. It comes down from very remote ages, possibly from cannibalism.¹ If we heard that the Chinese or Mohammedans had a religious custom in which they used currently the figure of eating the body and drinking the blood of a man (or god), and if we had no such figure of speech in our own use, we should consider it shocking and abominable.

478. The notion of obscenity is modern. It is evident that the notion of obscenity is very modern. It is due to the modern development of the arts of life and the mode of life under steam and machinery. The cheapening and popularization of luxury have made houses larger, plumbing cheaper, and all the apparatus of careful living more accessible to all classes. The consequence is that all the operations and necessities of life can be carried on with greater privacy and more observation of conventional order and decorum. Then the usages and notions grow more strict and refined. It is only in poverty that exposures and collisions occur which violate decency and involve obscenity. Therefore the standards and codes of all classes have risen, and the care about dressing, bathing, and private functions, for the sexes and for children, has been intensified. Out of this has come the notion of what is obscene, as the extreme of indecency and impropriety.

What we call obscene was, in ancient times, either a matter of superstition or a free field for jest. The

conventionalization in
favor of what is amusing must always be
recognized. It has
always entered into comedy in the theater. A jest
will not cover
as much now as it once would, but it still goes far.
The ancient
mythology long covered obscenity in drama.
When Hephaestus
caught Ares and Aphrodite in his net the gods all
enjoyed the
joke. The goddesses did not come to see the
sight.² The differ-
ence between the masculine and feminine judgment
as to whether
a thing is funny or shameful is well drawn.
Hera insisted to

¹ *Bull., Soc. d'Anthrop. de Paris*, 1904, 404. ² *Od.*, VIII, 332.